

RESEARCH ESSAY

Weather Carried in Stories: Climate Imagination in Regional Folklore

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Folklore rarely carries climate as a set of measurements. It remembers the wind that signals a journey, the rain that interrupts a wedding, or the animal whose arrival once marked a season. What can regional stories contribute to climate imagination without being mined as imprecise meteorological data? Folklore reveals climatic knowledge through narrative expectations, especially when environmental change makes an inherited sequence fail. The apparent object is only the entrance to the problem. Following variant tellings, seasonal vocabulary, performance dates, ecological observations, and narrators' comments on changed relevance shifts analysis toward the link between narrative recurrence and disrupted seasonal confidence and away from claims based on appearance alone.

A workable inquiry combines diachronic contrastive reading of story variants with community-led environmental documentation with a ledger of variant tellings, seasonal vocabulary, performance dates, ecological observations, and narrators' comments on changed relevance. The ledger separates direct observation, contributor explanation, technical condition, and later account. Relational study then turns on whether examination respects the story's social purposes while tracing concrete changes in its environmental cues. This procedure leaves room for ambiguity while preventing ambiguity from becoming an excuse for claims that no possible finding could weaken.

A coastal tale links a particular cloud bank to the safe return of fishing boats. Recent tellings preserve the image but add engines, forecasts, and a shoreline altered by construction, changing the warning's practical authority. Seen closely, the scene contains its own internal side-by-side inquiry: before and after, near and distant, permitted and discouraged, stable and revised. Those contrasts show how the connection between narrative

recurrence and disrupted seasonal confidence is produced. They also identify which part of the interpretation derives from evidence and which part remains a hypothesis about intention.

In an upland planting story, a bird call once opens the agricultural year. Younger narrators now describe the call as late or absent, turning a cyclical tale into an account of uncertainty. Unlike the first example, the second foregrounds the cost of successful form. Its coherence depends on labor or restriction that can be hidden from the final audience. Bringing that cost into analysis changes how the alignment between narrative recurrence and disrupted seasonal confidence should be judged and who must be included in the account.

Sequence supplies the most useful discipline. Variant tellings, seasonal vocabulary, performance dates, ecological observations, and narrators' comments on changed relevance should be ordered according to when contributors could know, act, revise, or object. This chronology reveals where the dynamic between narrative recurrence and disrupted seasonal confidence enters the process and prevents later justification from being read backward as original intention. The interpretive threshold remains whether interpretation respects the story's social purposes while tracing defined changes in its environmental cues at the moment a intervention could still be changed.

The framework treats mediation as substantive evidence. Through diachronic contrastive reading of story variants with community-led environmental documentation, choices that might otherwise appear technical become part of the account of the association between narrative recurrence and disrupted seasonal confidence. This does not mean that every minor choice carries equal weight; it means weight must be demonstrated by showing a plausible pathway from choice to experienced or documented implication.

Climate-oriented reading can conscript stories into an external agenda and erase their humor, sacred force, or local disputes. This objection is not a ceremonial concession. It identifies the point at which the central concept could become self-protecting. The response is to require whether account respects the story's social purposes while tracing case-bound changes in its environmental cues and to narrow any conclusion that cannot meet that demand. Under this rule, good intentions and sophisticated vocabulary do not substitute for impacts.

Scale introduces another analytical demand. A commitment that supports the interdependence between narrative recurrence and disrupted seasonal confidence in one encounter may change after repetition, touring, digitization, or administrative standardization. Scholarship should follow selected cases beyond their exemplary moment and ask whether inquiry respects the story's social purposes while tracing concrete changes in its environmental cues continues to hold when new actors inherit the form without the relationships that first sustained it.

Projects should let storytellers define access, connect variants to named places, and distinguish metaphorical weather from observations offered as practical knowledge. The practical proposal matters because values enter through routine operations. Budget lines, schedules, interfaces, contracts, and rehearsal habits determine whose knowledge can affect the outcome. Recording those selections also lets future readers distinguish an accidental success from a repeatable and governable practice.

A further limit concerns causation. The presence of variant tellings, seasonal vocabulary, performance dates, ecological observations, and narrators' comments on changed relevance may coincide with a change without fully producing it. Economic pressure, institutional history, bodily difference, or unrelated technical con-

ditions can redirect the same form. Comparative analysis should therefore identify plausible rival causes and reserve causal language for cases in which sequence and mechanism are sufficiently documented.

Longitudinal critical work is needed because the apparent success of an encounter can reverse after circulation. Following records of variant tellings, seasonal vocabulary, performance dates, ecological observations, and narrators' comments on changed relevance would reveal who retains access, credit, control, or in-

terpretive authority. The decisive question is whether whether reading respects the story's social purposes while tracing delimited changes in its environmental cues survives when the initial facilitators, technologies, or funding arrangements are no longer present.

The topic also demonstrates why form and ethics cannot be separated cleanly. Judgments about sequence, scale, timing, access, and revision are simultaneously aesthetic and social. Evaluating them together produces a more exact account

than either moral praise or formal description alone.

The central concept remains useful only because the reading also identifies its failure conditions. Folklore then becomes a repertoire for sensing altered expectation rather than a substitute instrument panel. Stories carry weather most powerfully when they show what a community expected the world to repeat and what no longer arrives on time.